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SELECTING BUTTER OF GOOD QUALITY

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If you can learn the quality grade or score of the butter you buy you can tell very easily whether the brand is as good as the merchant claims. Butter dealers may be authorized by the U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics to pack certificates of quality in their butter cartons, when every churning of their butter is officially graded. A considerable number of firms in various markets are taking advantage of this service. Some of their brands are so widely distributed that they are nationally known and the quality certificates are familiar to many housewives.

Only two official quality grades are used on these certificates at present -- 93 score, which is the highest quality of butter available in commercial quantities, and 92 score, which is almost as fine a butter. Butter which scores 90 is a good general purpose and table butter, but butter that scores below 90 is unsatisfactory to most consumers and is best used for cooking only. While you will not find these scores marked on the package, sometimes the creamery or the distributor will tell you what grade butter is being sold. Officially graded butter carries also on its certificate the date of grading, so that by reading the perforations you can tell exactly how recently the butter was scored by the grader.

What points are considered in scoring butter? First, flavor. This means not only the taste of the butter, but its aroma or smell. Body and texture come next in scoring butter. Good butter is smooth and waxy, not gummy, sticky, or crumbly when cut. Good butter color is evenly distributed, not mottled, and uniform in different samples from the same churning. In spring and summer the natural color of butter is yellow, due to the green feed eaten by the cows producing

the milk from which the butter was made. In winter, when little if any green feed is available, the butter fat is almost white, and for the sake of a uniform color throughout the year, artificial coloring is used to match the natural yellow.

The salt added to butter is another factor that must be scored. The salt has an important effect on the flavor. At the same time it is judged separately as to amount and the way it is distributed through the butter. We American like a little salt in our butter, but nobody wants too much of it. We do not want to be made aware of the salt by seeing it emerge on the surface after butter has been kept a few days, nor do we want to bite into a lump or crystal of salt that has failed to dissolve when the butter was mixed.

The package in which the butter is marketed counts also in its score. It goes without saying that the package or carton should be immaculately clean, and also neat and attractive. It is designed to protect the butter from the action of light and from strong flavors and odors. Whether one buys whole pound packages or those that are wrapped in quarters is largely a matter of personal preference and convenience. Dividing the pound into four separate sections does not affect the score. Any butter may develop a slight undesirable surface flavor if held too long. The solid pound presents less surface than the quarters and so may be preferred by some housewives, while those with small families may like to buy fractional parts of a pound frequently and so avoid any chance of deterioration. On the whole it is well not to ^{any supply of} keep butter very long under household conditions. With a good refrigerator buying butter about once a week should prove satisfactory both as a time-saving marketing practice and as an assurance of its keeping well.

20. 10